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FBI agent, 2 Soviets held on spy counts

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LOS ANGELES — The first FBI agent to be accused of selling American intelligence secrets to the Soviets was in custody yesterday, while a Russian couple alleged to be his co-conspirators were arraigned on espionage charges in federal court.

Richard W. Miller, a 20-year FBI veteran, was arrested at his home in San Diego Tuesday by agents and was immediately dismissed from the FBI. He was being held without bail and no plea was entered.

Mr. Miller, 47, and his codefendants could receive a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Svetlana Ogorodnikova, 34, a Russian immigrant said to be a major in the KGB, and her estranged husband, Nikolay Ogorodnikov, 51, were brought in handcuffs and under heavy security yesterday before U.S. Magistrate Volney V. Brown, Jr., who ordered them held without bail.

Mrs. Ogorodnikova, a small, slender, blond-haired woman, smiled faintly and smoothed back her hair as she read the charge of conspiracy to provide national defense information to a foreign government.

Mr. Ogorodnikov, wearing a baseball cap on his gray hair, was said by Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Kendall to have been standing at a window with a semiautomatic weapon when he was arrested the previous day.

At FBI headquarters in Los Angeles, Richard T. Bretzing, agent in charge of the division, spoke of Mr. Miller's arrest as an "aberration on the proud record" of the service.

FBI officials refused to give an assessment of possible damage done to the U.S. intelligence operation.

But Harry Rofitzke, a former Central Intelligence Agency operator who worked two years in the

FBI, said Mr. Miller's ability to compromise the system probably would be limited to the cases he was handling.

"An officer doesn't know all the cases other field agents are handling. Within his limits, he can tell the Russians what cases the FBI has that might implicate some KGB agents. What it does do is give the Russians an insight into which of their agents, or contacts, is being followed by or is threatened by FBI surveillance."

Mr. Miller, an agent assigned to the counterintelligence operation of the FBI in Los Angeles, allegedly sought \$50,000 in gold as well as \$7,000 in cash in return for passing secret information to Mrs. Ogorodnikova from May to September of this year.

"This is a very sad day for us," said FBI Director William H. Webster, speaking at a ceremony in Washington honoring 26 slain agents.

FBI affidavits disclosed alleged admissions by Mr. Miller about his relationship with Mrs. Ogorodnikova, who had "seemed sympathetic to his personal, professional and financial problems."

Mr. Miller lived in Lynwood, Calif., during the week and in San Diego county on weekends with his wife, Paula, and eight children.

By August of this year, the Soviet woman, who came to the United States in 1973 and is still a Soviet citizen, had persuaded the FBI agent to turn over material that included a classified document entitled "Reporting Guidance: Foreign Intelligence Information," the affidavits said.

"Discovery of this document would give the KGB a detailed picture of FBI and U.S. intelligence activities, techniques and requirements," the affidavits said.

Mrs. Ogorodnikova also planned with Mr. Miller a trip to Vienna and

Switzerland during which he was to meet with a high-ranking Soviet government official, the FBI said.

FBI documents said she even persuaded the agent to give her his FBI badge so she could prove at the Soviet consulate in San Francisco that he was a special agent and willing to cooperate with the Russian government.

In September, it was alleged, Mrs. Ogorodnikova introduced Mr. Miller to her husband, who she said had 30 years' experience in handling financial matters for "the network" and who was authorized to pay the agent for his cooperation.

In the affidavit, the FBI said that Mr. Miller told her husband, whom he then knew as Nikolay Wolfson, "that after he delivered the documents, he wanted to be paid \$50,000 in gold, to be stored in safety deposit boxes in three different banks."

Mr. Miller also asked that he be paid \$7,000 in cash on arrival in Mexico City, his stipulated location for passing on classified material, plus \$1,000 in travel expenses.

A search of Mr. Miller's home by FBI agents investigating the case uncovered classified documents "concerning foreign counterintelligence investigation and activities."

Mrs. Ogorodnikova told investigating agents that "many people in the Soviet emigre community in Los Angeles who were supportive of the Soviet system of government frequently contacted her to give information to pass along to Soviet officials," the affidavits said.

Alexander Polovets, editor of *Panorama*, a weekly newspaper aimed at the Russian emigres in Southern California, said the couple "were viewed as strange. In fact, the other Russians were surprised they were allowed to be so openly anti-American, distributing a pro-Soviet magazine and hiring halls to show Russian films. But we thought it was because, well, this is a free country." Mr. Polovets came to the United States from Russia eight years ago.

Mr. Ogorodnikov said he worked as a butcher in a meat-packing plant in Los Angeles, paid \$270 rent for the apartment he shared with his now-estranged wife, and was seeking custody of their 13-year-old son. He said he was destitute, with just \$85 in his savings account.

Mr. Bretzing, the assistant U.S. attorney, said Mrs. Ogorodnikova's cover was a job as a day nurse.

Washington Bureau correspondent Gilbert A. Lewthwaite contributed to this article.